Perfect Pellet: Owl Pellet Lab

\*\*These owl pellets are special. They are synthetic and packaged so that a complete skeleton is inside.

1. Pass out foil and ask students if they can guess what is inside the foil without opening it or crushing it.
2. Read:

The owl pellets that will be distributed to the students come from barn owls. Barn owls are medium sized owls with large heads and long legs. The size of the cranium is due to the enhanced sight sensitivity for seeing in the dark as well as the vast aural capacity enabling the owls to hear the faintest sound made by their prey. The barn owls are found all across the globe. They are mostly found in fields and pastures because of the increased rodent population, their favorite prey. All owls have an interesting way of dealing with their food. After digesting the nutritious parts of the small animals they eat, they regurgitate all of the undigested parts in a small pellet. The pellet is composed of bones, fur and teeth. Because barn owls don't tear their prey to pieces, there is always a complete skeleton of at least on rodent in every pellet. Every bone from the skull to the last tip of the tailbone can be found. A good observer with a little patience will be able to piece together the incredible skeletal masterpiece.

1. Pass out the pellets and worksheet. One pellet per 2 students if there is enough. If there is not, group them in 3’s. If you have extra, try not to use them (expensive).
2. Follow directions 1-6 on the worksheet.
3. Have a discussion with the class about the follow:

a. How can studying owl pellets help map the types of small animals found in a certain area?

b. Why do you usually find owl pellets that include bones, fur, and feathers?

1. Take pictures with the camera.